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HALF MOON SERIES  
PAPERS ON HISTORIC  
NEW YORK



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# Governor's Island

By

Blanche Wilder Bellamp

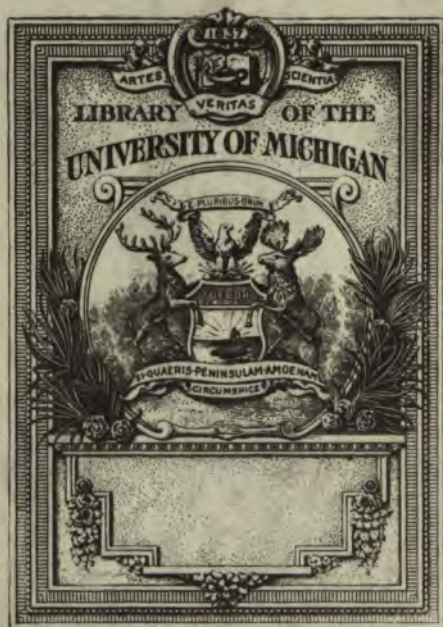


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<div>Half Moon Series</div> <div>Published in the Interest of the New York City History Club.</div> <div>VOLUME I. NUMBER V.</div> <div>GOVERNOR'S ISLAND.</div> <div>By BLANCHE WILDER BELLAMY.</div> <div><p>GOVERNOR'S ISLAND makes its modest but official entry into the records of "Historic New York" on a Summer's day, the 16th of June, 1637.</p><p>The new little Fort at the Bowling Green, with its earthworks and bastions, has been recently completed by the Dutch West India Company, under its colors of orange, white, and blue, with the lettering "G. W. C.," <i>Geotroyeerde West-Indische Compagnie</i>.</p><p>In the fort sits Wouter Van Twiller, second director sent by this "Privileged West India Company" to the Province of New Netherland. With him are Jacobus Corler, Andries Hudde, Jacus Boutyn, and Claes Van Elslant. All of them, under a variety of spellings, are men of note in the colony, and all sign themselves as members of the Director's Council.</p><p>Copyright, 1897, by MAUD WILDER GOODWIN.</p></div>	<div>The Purchase 1637</div>

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The Purchase 1637	<p>Two Indians, Cakapeteijno and Pehiwas, are also present. They have appeared and presented themselves and declared that, voluntarily and deliberately, and with the approbation of the community, for and in consideration of certain parcels of goods which they acknowledge to their full and grateful satisfaction to have received, they do "transport, cede, give over and convey to Wouter Van Twiller, Director General of New Netherland, the Nooten Island, in the Indian tongue called Pagganck, situate over against the Island Manahatas between the North and East Rivers of New Netherland."</p> <p>In a word, to dispense further with the formalities of the Roman-Dutch law, Van Twiller has bought the Island, now known as Governor's Island, from the Indians. He gives them in exchange an axe-head or two, a string of beads, a few nails. We cannot fix exactly the contents or value of these "certain parcels of goods," yet the bargain we may be sure is a shrewd one and notable, too, for one cause other than its shrewdness. No record has been found of any other sale of Pagganck, Nooten, Governor's Island, in the subsequent two hundred and sixty years of its history. Granted, captured, granted, leased, ceded, it has but once been made the subject of so plebeian a matter as exchange and barter.</p>



When the Director cast his acquisitive eye on Nooten or Nutten or Noten or Nut Island, it lay close beside and was almost a part of Long Island. Marabie Bevoise testified in court a century later that she "heard Jeromus Remsen's mother say that there was only a small creek between Nutten Island and the shoar, and that a squah carried her sister over it in a tub"; and Jeromus Remsen added that he had "heard his mother say . . . that it was all Sedge and Meadow, only a Creek between Nutten and Long Island."

This Creek, now Buttermilk Channel, a deep arm of the sea thrown around the island, was at low tide a shallow ford. The little Huguenot who was first ferried over it in a wash-tub was Sara, the daughter of Katalyntie Trico and Joris Jansen de Rapalye, "the first born Christian daughter in New Netherland." She was not the first European visitor to the island. The proud boast is even made that it was the first place of settlement in the harbor. This rests on a precarious support, an equivocal entry in the journal of the Labadist travelers, Dankers and Sluyter in 1679: "In its (the river's) mouth, before the city and between the city and Red Hoeck on Long Island lies Noten Island opposite the fort, *the first place the Hollanders ever occupied in this bay!*"

It is certain that the cattle of the settlers who came in 1625, bringing horses, cows,

Court  
Record  
Endorsed  
Copy of  
What  
Witnesses  
Say

The  
First  
Building  
1638

sheep, and hogs, were landed on Nutten Island, and remained there a day or two, but "there being no means of pasturing them there they were shipped in sloops and boats to the Manhates, right opposite said Island."

Having escaped these intruders, the Island was left to its owners, the Indians, "who sometimes manifested themselves with arrows," in undisturbed verdure and beauty until Van Twiller possessed himself of it, and began to put up the first building. This we learn from the fact that when his greedy rule ended in 1638, and an inventory of his property was made, he had "On Nooten Island the frame of a house and 21 pairs of goats." A saw-mill was also built at the Company's expense. In 1639 it was leased by "the Honorable, wise and right Prudent Mr. William Kieft" to Evert Bischoep, Sibout Claesen, and Harman Bastiansen, who "acknowledged to have amiably agreed and covenanted for the hire of it." They were to pay five hundred merchantable or sound planks yearly, one half pine and the other half oak ; to keep the mill in repair ; to deliver it in as good order as they received it, and "to saw not less than 65 to the bulk." They also undoubtedly supplied to the thrifty Dutch housewives those excellent hickory logs which they soon learned to appreciate "both for fire on their hearths and coals for their footstoves, because they

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last longer than others and are not buried in ashes."

After Van Twiller, "full of curses and of Council dinners," had departed from office, his so-called purchases were claimed by the Government. The fact that he, the Governor, was the first and only private owner of the Island, however, still links his memory to it, though it does not owe its present name directly to him. During the Dutch period, and generally throughout the English Colonial period, it was called Nutten Island, from the groves of nut trees, hickory and chestnut, which covered it.

But in 1698 it was set aside by the Assembly as being "part of the Denizen of his Majestie's Fort at New York, for the benefit and accommodation of his Majestie's Governours and Commanders-in-Cheif for the time being," and thence came to be familiarly called "The Governor's Island."

Another link with the memory of Van Twiller is the fact that when he came over in *De Zoutberg* in 1633 he brought with him one hundred and four soldiers, the first military force sent to the province. He was therefore its first official military head, a fact which properly associates his memory with the "Forteresse" now occupying his peaceful plantation. This "plantation," on which, by the way, Van Twiller did not, himself, plant,

Act of the  
3th Year  
of  
William



**Bill for  
Breaking  
Extrava-  
gant  
Grants of  
Land  
1699**

became in time a pleasant "Withdrawing place" for the Governors, but it proved a snare to one at least of the Royal Colonials who were its temporary possessors, and whose residence in the fort at the Battery was "only a gun-shotte away."

These Governors were, many of them, no less greedy and grasping than their Dutch forerunner, Van Twiller. In 1638 he was chastened for having taken to himself, among other trifles, Nooten Island, Red Hook, the two Islands at Hellegat, and for "Stretching out a hand toward two fflats on Long Island."

But in 1699 Lord Bellomont, then Governor of the Province, received instructions from the Lords Chief Justices of England whereby he was directed "to use all legall meanes for the breaking of Extravagant grants of Lands." The Council decreed that Mr. Attorney General should prepare a decree vacating the aforesaid grants, and his Excellency moved "That there bee a clause inserted in the Body of the Bill to prevent the Governor or Commander-in-Cheif of this Province for the time being from alienating Nutten Island, the King's Farm, the King's Garden, and the Swamp and Ffresch water as being the Demesne belonging to the Kings Governour for the time being."

The fact was that Bellomont's predecessor, Colonel Fletcher, had been rapidly disposing of all the lands within reach (on a strictly pay-

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<p>ing basis, of course), "Making immense grants in parcels of upwards of a hundred thousand acres to one man." He offered a peculiar outrage to his successor by proposing to lease Nutten Island, "Where the Governor kept a parcel of sheepe," to a footman !</p> <p>The later Governors did in fact lease the Island for their own profit. We have a pious petition from Richard Deane to Lord Dunmore in 1770 begging for a continuance of his lease.</p> <p>"The petition of Richard Deane," he says, "Most humbly Sheweth</p> <p>"That Your Lordship's Petitioner having Rented an Island call'd the Governor's Island from his Honour the Lieut Governor For the space of two years from the First of March last which Island is now your Lordship's.</p> <p>"Your Lordship's Petitioner has been at a great expence cultivating said Island which he knew he must lose very considerably by ; and which would greatly distress him and his large family, if it was not continued to him the time he agreed for, and as it allways has been customary when the Island has been lett and a change in Government to happen the Tenant in being to be continued at least for the time he had taken it ; And it was on expectation of the same kindness that your Lordship's Petitioner was induced to go to that Expence, therefore</p> <p>"Your Lordship's Petitioner Most Humbly submits his hopes to your Lordship's great goodness, not doubting to find that tender Benevolence for which your Lordship is so justly esteem'd ; and obtain your Lordship's Permission to continue and proceed on in his business as the season is so far advanced, which will the better enable him to pay your Lordship's Rent.</p> <p>"That your Lordship's petitioner has been led by the</p>	<p><b>Petition of Deane in 1770</b></p>

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Character of Cornbury 1702	<p>Ruling hand of kind Providence to the honour of being your Lordship's first Tenant in America. In which situation he is determined to Merit your Lordship's attention by a strict adherence to every duty incumbent on him which he humbly hopes will meet your Lordship's aprobation.</p> <p>" And your petitioner as in duty bound will not only forever pray ; <i>but will pay your Lordship's Rent very punctually !</i>"</p> <p>This cheerful assurance would certainly have appealed to Fletcher and still more to Belломont's successor. This was Lord Cornbury, Queen Anne's cousin, who made a fine stir in the province, and a fine scandal for his pecuniary dealings with the Governor's Island.</p> <p>In the Rutherford MSS. is a paper inscribed with the warning, "Felix quem faciunt aliena Pericula Cautum."</p> <p>It contains a portrait not too flattering of Lord Cornbury.</p> <p><i>" He was Farre from being the slave of his word, nor had the sence of honour or of shame the least influence upon his conduct. Farre from having any deep designs all his thoughts were employed on the then present moment and like a sharper in low life scrupled not at any means of aquiring money which he spent as profusely as he basely got. . . . .</i></p> <p><i>"In short he was a fine companion and with a great deal of good manners, almost the worst representative of a King that this quiet, easie, good-natur'd, giving people ever had."</i></p> <p>Smith, in his history of 1757, also pays his compliments to Cornbury:</p>

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<p>“ We never had a Governor so universally detested nor one who so richly deserved the Publick Abhorrence. In spite of his noble descent his behaviour was trifling, mean and extravagant. It was not uncommon for him to dress himself in a woman's habit and then to patrol the Fort in which he resided. Such freaks of low humor exposed him to the universal contempt of the people, but their indignation was kindled by his despotic rule, savage Bigotry, insatiable Avarice and Injustice not only to the Publick but even his private Creditors.”</p> <p>This was the Governor who came into possession of the Island in 1702. One of the oft recurring “ French Scares ” coming on at about that time he called “ a Councill in Fort Anne, the eighth day of Aprill, 1703,” announced that he had private information of a proposed attack by the French and urged an appropriation with the Design to “ erect two Batteries of Guns at the Narrows, one on each side.” The Assembly voted £1500 for the purpose, to be raised in the following way:</p> <p><i>Resolved,</i> That the said Fifteen Hundred Pounds be raised by a Poll Tax, and other ways in manner following, to wit:</p> <p>That every person having the Honour to be of her Majesty's Council of this Province shall pay Forty shillings.</p> <p>Every Representative in the General Assembly Twenty Shillings.</p> <p>Every Practitioner in the Law, Twenty Shillings.</p>	<p>The Tax for Fortifying The Narrows 1703</p>

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<p>The Tax for Fortifying The Barrows 1703</p>	<p>Every Person that Wares a Periwig, Five Shillings and Six pence.</p> <p>Every Bachelor above the Age of 25 years, Two Shillings and Three Pence.</p> <p>Every other Freeman from 16 years to 60, Nine pence.</p> <p>The Masters or Mistresses of Every slave or slaves, for each slave from 16 to 60 years of Age, One Shilling.</p> <p>And every gallon of spirits distilled in this Province from anything but Grain to pay Three pence per Gallon until the 25th day of March next.</p> <p>The sum resulting from this amusing tax on bachelors, periwigs, etc., was made over to the Governor, but nothing more was heard of the fortifications. "The money," writes Cadwallader Colden, "Lord Cornbury applied to building a pleasure house on Nutten Island for himself and succeeding Governors to retire to, when he inclined to free himself from business!"</p> <p>Cornbury boldly denied the charge that he had appropriated this sum, but we do not forget that he was "Farre from being the slave of his word." That he expended it all upon Governor's Island is another question. It is fair to state that no trace of the "pleasure house" remains, and that in 1703, "The time of the Great Sickness," Lord Cornbury re-</p>



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<p>             moved himself and his Court not to the Island, but to Jamaica, "a pleasant village" twelve miles out of harm's way. That he wished a convenient "With drawing place" at hand is altogether probable. We find in <i>Parker's Post-Boy</i> the following advertisement :           </p> <p>             "On Monday, the 2nd of October next will be exposed for Sale at Publick Vendue a large fine barge with Awning and Damask Curtains. Two setts of oars, sails and everything that is necessary for her. She now lies in the Dock and did belong to the late Governor Montgomerie."           </p> <p>             In such a "large fine barge" we can imagine an early Governor and his lady embarking on a summer evening to enjoy the cooling breezes of his "Demesne" on the Governor's Island. But the records do not justify the belief that it ever served the purposes of elegant villegiatura, and I think the high-sounding word "Demesne" has been misleading, as applied to the island. It was, as Bellomont wrote, "Useful for the grazing of a few coach horses and cows for the Governor's Family." There was a house on it, where Governor Tryon "kept out of the way" in the early days of the Revolution, when the Liberty Boys threatened his safety; and where, when the few British troops at the fort were removed to the <i>Asia</i>, that they also might be out of the way of the rising wrath, the women and children of the regiment were permitted to stay. It was certainly a cool and pleasant           </p>	<p>             Sale of Governor Mont- gomerie's Barge 1732           </p>

The First  
Quarantine  
Station  
of the  
Province  
1710

spot where a Governor might "Smoke his Canaster and tipple his ale in the shade." But the theory that Cornbury made it a country seat of any pretension is not tenable, as is shown by its use a very few years later, when, in 1710, it became of public importance. The island then served, in fact though not in name, as the first quarantine station of the Province.

This distinction it owes to the magnificent barbarity of Louis XIV. and to the pathetic plight and flight of the Palatines.

In 1689 Louis, under the pretext of hunting down the Huguenots, swept the Protestant Palatinate clean with fire and sword. The exiled wretches who had been its peaceable and prosperous inhabitants drifted about Europe for several years. In 1708 a small company of them found their way to England. They were headed by a Lutheran pastor, Joshua Kockerthal, and petitioned Queen Anne to send them to her American Colonies. The petition was favored by the "Lords Comm<sup>rs</sup> of Trade and Plantations." They at first thought of sending the Palatines to Jamaica or "Antego," where there was a great want of white people; but, "in regard that the climate of those Islands was hotter than that of Germany, they feared it might not be agreeable to their Constitutions." So they wrote to the Queen's most Excellent Maj<sup>ty</sup>:

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<p>“We humbly propose that they (the Palatines) be sent to settle upon Hudson's River in the Province of New York where they may be usefull to this Kingdom particularly in the production of Naval Stores <i>and as a frontier against the Ffrench and their Indians.</i>”</p> <p>The Queen graciously inclined her ear, and informed Lord Lovelace, the departing Governor, that “She was pleased to send Fifty-two German Protestants to New York and settle 'em there at her own Expenses.” They were to “Goe with Lord Lovelace in the Man of War and Transport Ship.” The Queen promised to subsist 'em for a year, at 9<i>d.</i> a day a head, with tools and implements, with a special gift of a glebe to their leader Kockerthal. They had some struggles with hunger, hard work, and greedy middle men, diversified by the pleasurable excitements of a religious controversy. Nineteen of their number became Quietists, and their countrymen suggested that it would be well to deprive them of their share of the Queen's allowance. It is pleasing to relate that Messieurs Van Dam, Barbarie, Provost, and Du Bois, appointed “to make an inquire into the dispute,” reported that “no aligations were proved,” whereupon Colonel Wenham was requested to “Victuall 'em in like manner with the other Germans till the aligations be maid out !”</p>	<p><b>The Coming of the Palatines</b></p>

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<b>Arrival of the "Lyon" 1710</b>	<p>A grant of land was made them and they were at length settled on Quasek Creek, now Chambers' Creek, in a locality called the Danskamer near the site of the present City of Newburgh.</p> <p>In 1710 a large body of Palatines was sent over with Governor Hunter, followed at intervals by others until they numbered several thousands.</p> <p>They were despatched through "the piety and bounty of the Queen of Great Britain," who "pincht herself to give them a subsistence," with a shrewd enough provision for repayment in the future.</p> <p>On the 13th day of June, 1710, the Council in session was informed that the first of the vessels bringing the immigrants, the ship <i>Lyon</i>, was in the harbor with many Palatines on board. The Mayor and the Corporation "prayed that they might not come within the City as there was just cause to believe that there were many contagious distempers among them which might endanger the Health of the Inhabitants of the City."</p> <p>This was certainly the case, for the Chyrurgeon, Thomas Benson, affirmed that he had administered aid and medicines to above 330 P'sons all sick at one time in the said passage and none but himselfe to assist them ; that he had not, with a covetous mind, made it his Bussynesse to heep up riches to himselfe,</p>

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<p>and that, for the preservation of their severall healths he had expended medicines of his owne to the amount of £8, 6d.</p> <p>It was promptly decided that Nutten Island was "the properest place to put them," from which the "properest" inference seems to be that it was not in use as a Governor's seat.</p> <p>It was further decreed that huts should be put up for the Palatines. It was ordered that "chiefe justice Mr. Barberie, and Mr. Bickley, commissioned to execute y<sup>e</sup> Office of Attorney Generall Draw uppe a Scheme for y<sup>e</sup> Ordering, Ruleing and Government of y<sup>e</sup> Palatines." Doctors Law, Moore, and Garran were sent to the ships to report "on the state and condition of Health," while two carpenters, Johannes Hebon and Peter Williamse, were ordered "to wait on the President to Nutten Island at two in the afternoon with respect to the Building the aforesaid huts."</p> <p>The other Palatine ships (except the <i>Bercley Castle</i> left at Portsmouth, and the <i>Herbert Frigat</i> cast ashore off Long Island) soon arrived, and the Island swarmed with its new colony.</p> <p>Governor Hunter immediately established special courts of Judicature, appointing Justices of the Peace for the Island, "because the said Island called Nutten Island lyeth not within the body of any County of this Province, and</p>	<p>Shelter for the Palatines 1710</p>



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Legislative Acts 1691	<p>in no wise subject to the Jurisdiction of any of the Courts that are established within the same."</p> <p>I think it interesting to notice here the legislative acts which had gone before and made this necessary.</p> <p>On Saturday, the 26th of September, 1691, the Assembly of the Province read for a third time a bill "to divide this Province and Dependencies into Shires and Countyes." The first clause reads: "The city and county of New York to contain all the Island commonly called Manhatans Island, Manning's Island, the two Barren Islands, and the three Oyster Islands. Manhatans Island to be called the City of New York, and the rest of the Islands the County." The bill, with one "for the raising and paying 150 men for the defence of Albany" passed the Assembly and their journal has this record :</p> <p>"It was ordered that Alderman Merrett, Mr. Cortlandt, Mr. Beekman, Mr. Renssalaer, do carry up the two bills (ut supra) to the Commander in Cheif and Council for their Assent.</p> <p>"The gentlemen returned from the Fort, say they delivered the two Bills (ut supra) and the Commander in Cheif and Council say it is very well, they will make all the speed imaginable."</p> <p>We note that the Journal of the Legislative Council has this entry :</p>

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<p>“ At a Councill held at Fort William Henry the 26th of September, 1691. . .</p> <p>“ The bill for dividing the Province into Shires and Countyes, read the third time, is consented unto by this Board with the following amendments, vizt.,</p> <p>“ <i>Nutten Island</i> and the three Oyster Islands to be added to the County of New York.”</p> <p>Returning to the Journal of the Assembly again we find that Colonel Cortlandt and Chidley Brook Esqs. brought back the bill to the Assembly on the 28th of September, and that “Upon reading the amendments of the Bill for dividing the Province &amp;c., this House has agreed to all the amendments and corrected them in the Bill accordingly except <i>Nutten Island</i> which belongs to his Majesty's Fort and Garrison and ought not to be comprehended in the County.”</p> <p>This decision was sent up again to the Fort, this time “by Mr. Pell &amp; Mr. Duckfberry,” and assented to by the Governor and his Council. Then the bill was sent to England for the approval of the King, and in “Baskett's Laws” we at last find it marked “confirmed May 2, 1708,” without the amendment.</p> <p>Nutten Island was made a part of the City of New York by the Montgomery Charter of 1730. By an act of March 7, 1788, it was finally included in the County of New York, but it was Governor Hunter's ordinance which gave it the necessary jurisdiction “For y<sup>e</sup> order-</p>	<p>Charter of 1730 Act of 1788</p>

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Special Jurisdiction 1710	<p>ing of y<sup>e</sup> Palatines !" Under this jurisdiction they spent the summer on the Governor's Island and in the fall were placed upon lands purchased for them on Livingston Manor. They had agreed to settle on the lands which were assigned to them ; not to leave them without permission and not to manufacture woollen goods. They were to make tar and turpentine to be sold for the benefit of the government until all the money advanced had been repaid. When the debt was wiped out each was to have forty acres of land, free of taxes for seven years.</p> <p>Their leaders had hoped to secure "The sunny lands of Schoharie," but they were forced (it is said "by early ring-rule in Albany") to take up the gloomy pine forests of the Livingston Manor, disposed of at a neat profit by their owner who also got the contract "to subsist 'em" and a salary as their chief inspector ; while a part of them were settled near Saugerties, then called the West Camp, on the other side of the river.</p> <p>Their struggles and sufferings are a sorry page in the Colonial records, brightened by the fact that some of them had the courage to break away from their miserable bondage and to finally establish themselves in the place of their own choice.</p> <p>The Governor's Island entertained one angel unawares when it harbored the Palatines.</p>

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<p>In the list of those left in New York after the removal to Livingston Manor, we find Johanna Zangarin Wid. 33.  John Peter 13.  Johannes, 7.  Anna Katharine, 10.</p> <p>This little "John Peter 13" was the famous Zenger. Apprenticed to William Bradford the Printer, he became in 1733 the proprietor and publisher of the <i>New York Weekly Journal</i>. In this paper he defended popular rights and the popular party with such boldness and power that like Wilkes, thirty years later, he had the good fortune to be martyred.</p> <p>Nos. 7, 47, 48, &amp; 49 of his Journal were ordered to be burned by the hands of the common hangman or whipper, near the pillory, between the hours of eleven and twelve, as containing in them many things tending to sedition and faction. He himself was imprisoned in the City Hall in Wall Street and sued for false, scandalous, malicious and seditious libel. His trial is famous in early Court records of the Province. Andrew Hamilton of Philadelphia made a brilliant defense on the ground that the charges made by Zenger in his paper were true; putting to open confusion the claim of the judges that "no testimony as to the truth of the facts could be admitted" and that "a libel was all the more dangerous for being true."</p>	<p>The Trial of Zenger 1735</p>

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The First Encampment 1755	<p>The verdict was "Not Guilty." Hamilton departed for Philadelphia with colors flying, cannon saluting, Aldermen dining and the corporation offering him its crowning glory, the freedom of the City in a gold box.</p> <p>Zenger, the obscure little immigrant from the Governor's Island, remained with the lasting honor of being the first Citizen of New York to assert, and to vindicate the freedom of the Press.</p> <p>The year 1755 was the first to see the Governor's Island fulfilling its manifest destiny as a peaceful abode for the men and munitions of war. Sir William Pepperell, the hero of Louisburg, after distinguishing himself on Cape Breton Island, was ordered in 1755 to take part in the triple expedition against Canada, and to proceed to Niagara under the command of General Shirley. Upon reaching New York he received from England his appointment as Major General. This rank gave claim to a higher command than that of one regiment, and he returned to New England, where Shirley appointed him to the command of the Eastern Frontier. While in New York, beside being much honored and entertained he was occupied in filling his regiment, and in the New York Archives I find this bill :</p> <p style="text-align: right;">"New York, June the 3rd, 1755.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">"Rec'd of the Honble. James De Lancey Esq. &amp;c., the</p>



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<p>sum of Three Pounds, fourteen shillings and nine pence for five cords and three quarters of Oak wood for the use of Sr. Wm. Pepperel's Regiment encamped on Nutten Island in full pr. me ben hildreth."</p> <p>The Treasury warrants of April 26th, 1755, give an order for the payment to Oliver De Lancey, Esq., or his order of</p> <p>"Two thousand pounds to be by him applied in the furnishing Six months provisions and providing for the transportation and other necessarys for the two Companies of Sir William Pepperrell's Regiment and a Detachment of all the effective men belonging to the two Independent Companies of his Majesty's Troops in this Province now ordered to Oswego."</p> <p>On August 23d, 1755, this bill was sent in :</p> <p>"James Delansea Esq., To Cornelius Tiebout.</p> <p>Aug. 23, 1755.</p> <p>To 322 bunches Straw for } Gene'l Pepparil's Redgement. } a 4d. £5.7.4 "</p> <p>In these scanty records I can find no proof that Sir William was present in person on the Island. He may have put his regiment there for safe-keeping (since it is not so easy to desert from an island, and its ranks were then thin), while the Livingstons were offering him colonial hospitality in the town. But it is safe to believe, at least, that he often set sail in Governor Delancey's barge to visit and in-</p>	<p><b>The First Encamp- ment 1755</b></p>

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<p>The First Fortification 1776</p>	<p>spect his men encamped on the Governor's Island.</p> <p>1755 saw the first military encampment. 1776 saw the first fortification. There had been unending talk about fortifying the Island. The Governors wrote about it but did not do it although, in 1774, an "Estimate of the Expence of a Fortress on Nutton Island" was carefully made, and called for £17,536. 4s. 7d. Smith says,</p> <p>"About 6 Furlongs South East of the Fort lies Nooten Island, containing about 100 or 120 acres, reserved by an act of assembly as a sort of Demesne for the Governors, upon which it is proposed to erect a strong castle, because an enemy might from thence easily bombard the city without being annoyed either by our battery or the Fort."</p> <p>But the "strong castle" was not erected, nor were any defenses undertaken until, in 1776, the storm centre of the Revolution moved from Boston to New York.</p> <p>In the spring of '76, all the familiar story of the hasty preparations for defense was being enacted in New York. The <i>Phoenix</i> and the <i>Asia</i> were "bullying the town," "everybody turned to with great spirit and industry," and the works were well under way when General Putnam arrived, on April 4th, preceding Washington by ten days. On the 7th of April, 1776, he wrote to the President of Congress: "After getting the works in such for-</p>

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<p>wardness as will be prudent to leave I propose immediately to take possession of Governor's Island which I think a very important post."</p> <p>On the 9th, Colonel Silliman, of Connecticut, wrote to his wife:</p> <p>"Last evening draughts were made from a number of Regiments here, mine among the rest, to the amount of 1000 men. With these and a proper number of Officers Gen'l Putnam at Candle lighting embarked on Board of a number of Vessels with a large Number of intrenching tools and went directly on the Island a little below the City called Nutten Island where they have been intrenching all night and are now at work and have got a good Breast work there raised which will cover them from the fire of the Ships. . . ."</p> <p>The <i>New York Gazette</i> says: "Monday night 1000 Continental troops stationed here went over and took possession of Governor's Island and began to fortify it. . . ."</p> <p>A citadel and outworks were begun, and the general orders of April 16th read: "Colonel Prescott's Regiment is to encamp on Governor's Island as soon as the weather clears. They are to give every assistance in their power to the works erecting thereon."</p> <p>This was the famous Bunker Hill regiment, the 7th Continental Infantry, the first after Pepperell's to occupy the Island. Later they were joined by the 4th Continental Infantry, Colonel Nixon. In May, Washington wrote to Lee: "In a fortnight more I think the City will be in a very respectable position of de-</p>	<p>The First Fortifica- tion 1776</p>

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<b>Escape of the Garrison 1776</b>	<p>fence. Governor's Island has a large and strong work erected and a regiment encamped there. In August, a few days before the battle of Long Island, Lord Stirling wrote, in answer to a request for more men on the Island : "The General bids me say, that in our present situation Governor's Island is more strong and better guarded than any other post of the Army."</p> <p>On the 27th day of August, 1776, came the battle, the defeat, and the escape of Long Island. Neither Washington nor Nixon seems to have given any especial account of the Governor's Island garrison, but the Tory, Thomas Jones, Justice of the Peace for the Province, does his best to supply the omission. He says :</p> <p>"The rebels in their hurry and consternation upon abandoning Long Island left the garrison upon Nutten Island (which they had strongly fortified) consisting of 2,000 men, 40 pieces of heavy cannon, military stores and provisions in abundance without the least means of quitting the Island. The British army was at Brookland, the distance from thence to Nutten Island not more than a mile, the distance from Long Island opposite to it not more than a quarter of a mile. The royal army consisted of near 30,000 men, in high spirits and flushed with victory, yet no steps were taken to make prisoners of the garrison and get possession of the forts, stores, artillery, and provisions there deposited. In the evening of the same day (unaccountable as it is) a detachment of the rebel army went from New York to Nutten Island with a number of boats, and carried off the troops, the stores, artillery, and provisions without the least inter-</p>

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<p>ruption whatever, though General Howe's whole army lay within a mile of the place, and his brother, the Admiral, with his fleet, covered the Bay at a little distance below the island. It is a circumstance somewhat remarkable that while General Howe was engaging the rebel army upon Long Island, the Admiral lay still at Staten Island. Indeed he sent up four ships, which anchored about two miles below Nutten Island, and kept up a most tremendous fire against the rebel fortifications there. But the distance was so great it made no impression, did no injury, and might as well have been directed at the moon as at Nutten Island, for the good it did. The rapidity of the tide between Staten Island and New York is such that the whole fleet might with ease have reached the East River with the flood in two hours, had the wind even been ahead. Had this been done on the day of the action upon Long Island, and the river lined from Nutten Island to Hellgate (and the ships he had under his command were more than sufficient for the purpose) not a rebel would have escaped from Long Island; all must have submitted. The whole rebel grand army, with Washington at their head, would have been prisoners, rebellion at an end, the heroes immortalized, and the 27th day of August, 1776, recorded in the annals of Britain as a day, not less glorious than those on which the famous battles of Ramillies and Blenheim were fought and celebrated victories obtained, by the heroic Duke of Marlborough. But this was not done, and why it was not, let the brothers Howe tell."</p> <p>"The brothers Howe" were able at least to secure the cage after the birds had flown. They occupied and held Governor's Island until the Evacuation of New York.</p> <p>In 1779, when D'Estaing's fleet was looked for, General Pattison, the British Commandant, writes to Lord Townshend that he is busy "repairing the ruined fortifications and bat-</p>	<p><b>Fortifications Repaired 1779</b></p>



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<b>Supplies for the Workmen 1779</b>	<p>teries erected by the rebels on Governor's Island." "I called a meeting of the principal Inhabitants," he says, "and stated to them the expediency of the Citizens taking up Spade and Pick axe to defend and secure their own property against a Foreign enemy. They most readily and obligingly met my wishes and the next morning 500 Citizens were at work throwing up Earth, &amp;c., &amp;c., on Governor's Island. They still continue their work with great good humor and cheerfulness. A great many of the most Capital Merchants and Shop-keepers pique themselves upon working with the rest and will receive no pay or reward. The lower class are paid at the expense of the City at the rate of ten shillings currency per day, and their rations of provisions from the Government."</p> <p>These laborers did not lack substantial comforts. "Sir," says an order of September 29, 1779, "I am directed by Major Gen'l Pattison to desire that you will be so good as to order the usual allowance of provisions, Rum and Spruce Beer to be issued to 300 laborers who are to be employed on the King's works at Governor's Island, and to commence to-morrow the 30th Instant." A second order calls for tents, blankets, camp kettles, fuel, and boats, all to be ready at six o'clock in the morning at White Hall.</p> <p>But their labors were in vain. The Union</p>

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<p>Jack ran down for the last time from its staff at the fort, and the British bade a lasting goodbye to New York. How and when they left Governor's Island we know definitely from two letters found in the Clinton MSS.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">" GOVERNOR'S ISLAND Dec. 3rd, 1783, 7 A.M.</p> <p>" SIR :</p> <p>" Having received orders from Rear Admiral Digby to withdraw the Guard together with the whole naval Hospital from this Island, I beg to acquaint your Excellency, that at the hour of Eleven A.M. this day the Guard together with the Naval Hospital will be withdrawn from the Island; Lieutenant Graham of the Navy only excepted who will remain a certain time in order to deliver up the keys of the different buildings &amp;c. to whom you shall think proper to send and take charge of them. . . .</p> <p>" I am also desired to inform your Excellency, that the only property disposed of belonging to Government on Governor Island are the hulls of two Brigantine's hauled up on each side of the wharf, formerly occupied as store hulks for naval provisions, and sold some time ago by John Delafons Esqr. Agent Victualler in consequence of orders to him given by Rear Admiral Digby to a Mr. Jos. Mercereau of Staten Island.</p> <p>" I shall do myself the honor to inclose for your Excellency's better information a description List of the different buildings regularly numbered with the Keys, to the person you shall think fit to take charge of them from Lieutenant Graham, who will have the honor of delivering this and will answer such questions respecting the present state of the Island as your Excellency may be desirous of knowing.</p> <p>" I have the honor to be your Excellency's</p> <p style="text-align: right;">" Most obedt &amp; Most humble Servt.,</p> <p style="text-align: right;">" JAMES DUNCAN,</p> <p>" To His Excellency " Capt in the Navy &amp;c.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">" Governor CLINTON, &amp;c., &amp;c.,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">" State of New York."</p>	<p>Evacuation of the British 1783</p>

The  
Buildings  
1783-1841

"Centurion, OFF NEW YORK, Dec. 3, 1783, 11 A.M.

"SIR :

"Agreeable to my letter of this morning's date, I do myself the honor of inclosing your Excellency a description List of the different buildings &c. on Governor's Island, and have order'd the Keys to be label'd with numbers corresponding to the different houses &c. I have the honor to be your Excellency's most obedt. & most humble servant.

"JAMES DUNCAN."

A DESCRIPTION LIST OF THE BUILDINGS &C., ON  
GOVERNOR'S ISLAND, DEC. 3.

1. No. 1. The Wharf.
2. A well 18 feet deep with pump &c.
3. Captain's Kitchen.
4. ditto Cellar.
5. A Barn for Cattle.
6. Gardner's House.
7. Hospital Kitchen.
8. Do Well.
9. Captain's Well.
10. Guard House.
11. Convalescents Hospital.
12. Captain's Barrack.
13. Lieutenant's do.
14. Do Kitchen.
15. Summer House.

A child who lived and played on the Island in 1841 remembered the "Old Summer House" on the western side, and "Rotten Row," which must have been a barrack. It was a series of tumble-down rooms one story high, of wood on a stone foundation, and each room had a trap-door !

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<p data-bbox="236 271 781 491">There were also stone ruins called the "Old Guard House." These have all disappeared, but the wharf, it is thought, stands on the site of the one first built, and a "well with a pump" between the wharf and the South Battery, on the eastern side, is still pointed out as the "Old Well."</p> <p data-bbox="236 495 781 684">In 1784 colonial governors were things of the past, but their successors in the State were at once confirmed in one of their privileges, "Governor's or Nutten Island" being assigned for their use by the Legislature until otherwise ordered.</p> <p data-bbox="236 688 781 1262">There is a tradition, often repeated, that Governor Clinton leased the Island for a race-course, and that races were run upon it in 1784-85. No such lease can be found among Governor Clinton's papers, nor any allusion to the races in the newspapers of the day. The evidence seems to be hearsay only, and of corresponding value. But the tenure of the Governors was brief. In 1788 the Surveyor-General was ordered by the Legislature to survey the Island (which had been done, by the way, by Captain Montessor in 1766); to lay it out in lots not exceeding two acres each, with such lanes or streets as were deemed proper, and to sell these lots after the manner prescribed for unappropriated lands. The commissioners of the Land Office were given power to reserve any part they thought neces-</p>	<p data-bbox="822 278 889 342"><b>Survey Ordered 1788</b></p>

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Grant to the Regents 1790	<p>sary for fortifications. The survey may have been made; but I have not found the sale of any lot recorded, though there is an allusion made to some small claim of Morgan Lewis.</p> <p>But the Legislature soon bethought itself of a new use for the Island. The Regents of the University, Alexander Hamilton's pet institution, represented that <i>Columbia College</i> and the various academies under their rule "labored under impediments because of a deficiency of funds." To assist them in these sadly familiar circumstances, the Legislature in 1790 empowered them to take seizin and possession of certain lands belonging to the State, among them "a certain Island called and known by the name of Governor's Island;" to lease, grant, and demise it from time to time "so that no more than two dwelling-houses shall at any time be erected on the said Island;" and to use the rents, issues and profits for the benefit of the said college and academies.</p> <p>They reserved the right to claim any part of it, however, if it were needed for public defence.</p> <p>Let us hope that it was gratitude for this generosity which brought the entire faculty and students of <i>Columbia College</i>, tradition says, with spades and pick-axes in their academic hands to labor at earthworks on the Island when the "French scare" of 1797 again called loudly for harbor defence.</p>

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<p>The Regents at once arranged to lease the Island "so as no lease should be for a longer term than twenty-one years, and so as that said Island should not be leased in more than two parcels." Their first and only tenant was John Price, who rented the Island for twenty-one years for an annual rent of £93, without any deduction for taxes.</p> <p>But Columbia College cannot have waxed rich on its share of this sum.</p> <p>In 1794, an old act of 1758, the first quarantine act of the Province, "to prevent the bringing in and spreading of Infectious distempers in this Colony," was revived with a change! That act compelled infected vessels to "make their quarantine" at Bedlow's Island. Now, the Governor was authorized to appropriate Governor's Island for the purpose.</p> <p>To what extent the act was operative in its new form is a question.</p> <p>In 1794 and 1795 Governor's Island was certainly a military post. On the 11th of October, 1794, a commanding officer on the Island, stronger in military etiquette than in the civilian commonplaces of spelling, writes:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">"GOVERNEURE ISLAND, October 11th, 1794.</p> <p>"SIR :</p> <p>"Yesterday morning Admiral Murra Sent a Lieut. to this Island to inform me as a commanding officer whether it would be proper or whether it had been Customary to Salute the Flag of the United States at such a Distance and what number of guns would be given. In answer to his</p>	<p>The Federal Salute 1794</p>

Salute  
of the  
*Semillante*  
1794

Selute I informed the Lieut. that the Admiral Lay at such a Distance I thought it Improper to Selute but should it so Happen that the Admiral, did Come Up within one mile in a Southerly Direction of this Island according to Your Excellencies orders I should Return his Selute But as to Stipulate for the Number of Guns it was out of my power But that our National Selute was thirteen at present.

" Agreeable to your Excellencies order Sometime ago I shall attend to Returning the Selute Should the Admiral Come Up. Your Excellence will please to understand that Admiral Murra lays at the watering plase so caled nere Staten Island.

" I am Sir Your Excellencies

" Most obedt & Humbl Servt.,

" CORNS R. SEDAM,

" Capt N Sub Legion."

In this year also the Ferry was established "at 3d a head but *all fatigue parties* to pass gratis."

Again on the eighteenth day of November, 1794, the Secretary of War, Knox, informs "the Officer Commanding upon Governor's Island" that the Minister of the French Republic has made representations to him! The French frigate *Semillante* had fired a salute of fifteen guns. The fort had not replied. The returning of a salute was "a respect justly due to a Nation with which we are connected by sentiments and Treaties of Friendship and Alliance." The President of the United States wished the commanding officer immediately to fix a time when he would fire the Federal salute of fifteen guns!

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<p>And once more on the 19th of April, 1795, "Alex. Thompson, Capt. Corps Artillerists and Engineers," writes to Governor Clinton that the French vessels of war have left the North River, and that at this time the fifteen-gun salute was duly delivered from the Battery, on the island where he commands.</p> <p>But, in spite of these extremely civil salutes, our relations with France became unpleasantly strained. Great fears were felt of a French attack, and New York City begged for protection. New York State was in debt to the general government, however, and could get no appropriation until Congress permitted it to spend money on its fortifications, which should be credited against its debt; the fortifications with their improvements to belong to the United States Government.</p> <p>Great exertions were at once made, and continued for several years, resulting at length in those beautiful and peaceful ornaments of the harbor known as Fort Columbus and Castle William.</p> <p>For close upon a century they have smiled upon the city, and been ready to frown upon a foe, and undoubtedly they would have fired a hostile gun had any enemy appeared within reach to justify such an incivility. All the authorities agreed that they were necessities, however, during the uncertainties of the years from 1794 to the close of the War of 1812.</p>	<p><b>Fort Columbus and Castle William</b></p>



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<b>Vincent's Observations 1794</b>	<p>The State had already appropriated £30,000 for fortifications at or near the city and port of New York, and £20,000 to be used only on Governor's, Bedloe's, and Oyster Islands, when in 1794 a committee reported to Congress that \$3,727.52 were needed for the defences on Governor's Island. At this time M. Vincent made a report on the needs of the harbor, when the always expected, never arriving enemy's fleet should appear. "Arrived at the entrance of Sandy-Hook," he says, "the hostile Ships will have yet twenty miles to run before they can annoy the City and the Vessels in the Harbor!" "If they should arrive to the narrows," he adds, "Governor's Island will be most important because its happy position can secure crossing fires with the points taken on the right hand shore and also with the city, at the mouth of the East River." . . . This point will be consequently the object of the nicest attention. It will be occupied by at least twenty pieces of the largest caliber and four mortars, the whole distributed with cautious knowledge."</p> <p>To know what was really done upon the Island for the next twenty years, we must take the American State Papers for military affairs, and note the reports of committees and of the Secretary of War. In 1794 Knox reports through <i>Vincent's Observations</i>, that there is "on Governor's Island one bastioned</p>

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<p>square commanding two low batteries, quite finished." "It is to be observed nevertheless that, being only sodded it will not stand a very long time."</p> <p>In 1796 the Report dignifies the works with the name of a Fort :</p> <p>"Governor's Island has been fortified with a Fort made of earth and two batteries under its protection partly lined with brick masonry, two air furnaces, a large powder magazine, and a barrack for the garrison." In the next year, 1797, John Adams wrote : "Although I think the moment a dangerous one I am not scared!" This was not true of New York. It was badly scared! The French crisis seemed at hand, work began with energy, supported by an appropriation of thirty thousand one hundred and seventeen dollars, and the Fort received the added distinction of a name, Fort Jay. From 1794 to 1806 something over a hundred and ten thousand dollars was devoted to the works on the Island. But the Fort was not so lasting as the honor of its name. In 1806 it disappeared, pulled down in disgrace, pronounced by no less a dignitary than Thomas Jefferson, as "rubbish." "All except the walled Counterscarp, the Gate, the Sally-port, Magazine and two barracks." "On the site of the old fort," continues President Jefferson's report of 1809, "A new one, Fort Columbus, has been erected, of the same</p>	<p><b>Fort Jay</b> <b>1797-1806</b></p>

176	<b>Governor's Island</b>
<b>Fort Columbus 1809 Castle William 1811</b>	<p>shape on three of its sides as the former, with the addition of fourteen feet on each side. On the North side a ravelin has been added, with two retired, casemated flanks. The new Fort with two new brick barracks is now nearly completed and has fifty cannon mounted. On a point of rocks at the Western Extremity of Governor's Island a circular castle of durable Mason work, to be connected with Fort Columbus by a zig-zag covered way has been commenced and completed to the second floor and is now ready to receive its first tier of guns, which are mounted and ready to be placed. The exterior diameter of this Castle is two hundred and ten feet, and when finished will mount two hundred pieces of heavy ordnance."</p> <p>This "circular castle," named for General William of the New York Militia, was completed in 1811. And now the Island was in fine trim for defence, if only it had been attacked; but it never was! A century of peace with France began. The War of 1812 came and went. Troops were on the Island. Four companies of artillery, three of the First Regiment and one of the Third made the garrison, with occasional detachments from other commands, and in the summer of 1814 there were more than a thousand officers and men at the post. The only blood shed, however, was that of deserters shot on the parade with</p>

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<p>all the dishonors of war,—soldiers drawn up in a hollow square with one side open; the victim kneeling on his coffin, the death warrant read, the fatal shot discharged, and the band playing softly the customary dirge, old “Roslyn Castle.”</p> <p>But with the coming-in of the present century the Island ceases to be a subject for a chronicle. Its modern history begins, and a capital testimony it is to the old saw, “Happy is the island that has no history.” Nothing exciting has happened upon it, and yet it is said to be the favorite post of the United States Army!</p> <p>In 1800 it was ceded by the State of New York to the United States, and in 1821 Federal military headquarters were transferred to it from the city. In 1832, while the works were being thoroughly repaired, the Island had an unwelcome guest—the cholera. In 1836 its garrison made a trip to Florida. But its soldiers came back to it in the next year; and it served as an artillery post for fifteen years more, until 1852, when it was made the principal depot of the general recruiting service. The thunders of the Civil War could scarcely shake it from its tranquillity, though then for a second time Fort Columbus “killed its man.” When Lafayette was too much crowded with prisoners, Castle William caught the overflow, at one time as many as a thou-</p>	<p><b>Ceded to the United States 1800</b></p>

178	<b>Governor's Island</b>
Garrison Life in 1897	<p>sand. Among these prisoners was John Yates Beall. In 1864 he had tried a form of piracy on the Lakes, making an attempt to capture the <i>Michigan</i> in Sandusky Bay. He failed, was captive instead of captor, and in 1865 was hanged by Governor Dix's orders on the parade ground at Fort Columbus. When on June 30, 1878, the Island was made the headquarters of the Department of the East, with the "Superb" Hancock as the first general in command, the life of to-day was ushered in.</p> <p>It is the life of an ordinary garrison, plus the distinctions of department headquarters and the distractions of the metropolis, its neighbor. In the garrison are three companies of infantry, and the Governor's Island band. At six o'clock of a morning the buglers stand on the parade before the fort, and blow the reveille. In military parlance, this fort is "an enclosed pentagonal work, with four bastions of masonry." To the eye it is a beautiful star, near the centre of the Island, outlined in gray on a gentle rise of green lawn. The moat which surrounds it is green. The glacis sloping away on all sides toward the water is green. The trees which line the brick sidewalks are green and shady, though not one nut-tree remains to justify the old name.</p> <p>The sally-port and the drawbridge, the unfilled moat and the unused cannon, are</p>

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<p>gentle witnesses to the green old age of this relic of outgrown military science.</p> <p>Castle William still stands on the north-western corner of the Island, on a bed of rocks which it rescued from the covering tide. "This," said the Secretary of War when it was first completed in 1811, "is a stone tower, with fifty-two, forty-two, and thirty-two pounders mounted on two tiers under a bomb roof, and the terrace above is intended to mount twenty-six fifty-pound Columbiads." In untechnical description it is one of the beauties of the Bay,—a round tower, stately and imposing, like St. Angelo, but quite harmless and comfortable in these homely, practical days, when men-of-war six miles off can shell the town without coming within sight of these time-honored guns. Green and picturesque, too, is the old South Battery, set to protect Buttermilk Channel on the southeastern point of the Island, completing the fortifications of the army post, Fort Columbus. This post includes the whole of Governor's Island except six acres, and its commanding officer rules the garrison and reports to headquarters with the same authority and through the same channels as if his post were a thousand miles away. The six acres on the northeastern shore of the Island belong to the New York Arsenal, whose commanding officer is a second Federal military power, and</p>	<p><b>Castle, Battery and Arsenal 1897</b></p>

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Chapel of St. Cornelius 1847	<p>whose pyramids of cannon-balls and rows of guns threaten ominously. But they, too, mean no harm, the dangerous material being stored out of sight. Still a third quite separate authority on the Island is the Major-General, with his personal staff, and his department staff, commanding the Department of the East, of which Fort Columbus is one post. The little chapel of St. Cornelius, maintained by Trinity Church, and the symbol of a still higher power, has stood for fifty years just north of the South Battery. A professor in Columbia College, Dr. McVicar, built it in 1847, and preached in it for years, until an order requiring all post chaplains to live at their posts, obliged him to choose between the Island and the College. As he preferred the latter, the little church was bought from him for the post, and is a part of old Trinity Parish, its vicar serving as Acting Post-Chaplain.</p> <p>The Hospital, the Military Institute, and the Museum with its Indian curiosities, its colonial relics, and, <i>facile princeps</i>, Sheridan's horse, Winchester, all invite us to consider how interesting they too are.</p> <p>But the bugler whom we left sounding the reveille has passed on to the guard mounting, the drill-call and recall, the parade and the retreat. The sunset gun is fired from the sea-wall below Castle William. The hundred prisoners who have been at work on the</p>

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<p>roads and lawns are again confined within its walls. The bugler calls to quarters. Night settles down. The lights die out. There is no sound but the wash of the water and the click of the sentry's heel. Fort, battery, castle, arsenal, and magazine are asleep. Governor's Island is as peaceful as when, three hundred years ago, "Pagganck" lay like an emerald gem pendent on the green chain of Long Island,—and the bugler blows "Taps."</p>	<p>"Taps" 1897</p>





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